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**DeSoto, Texas, Man Faces Federal Charges Related to
Internet Auction Fraud**

***Defendant Charged With Mail Fraud, Money Laundering and
Structuring Financial Transactions - Faces 155 Years Imprisonment***

United States Attorney Richard B. Roper announced that DeSoto, Texas, resident, Thomas Peters, was charged in a 10-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Dallas yesterday with four counts of mail fraud, three counts of money laundering and three counts of structuring a financial transaction to avoid reporting requirements. Peters, age 39 will surrender to federal authorities.

According to the indictment, from February through August 2003, Peters sold stolen merchandise through online auctions (eBay) to more than 50 victims which resulted in a loss of more than \$200,000.00. Peters would obtain stolen merchandise, including cameras, and represent that the merchandise was new. Buyers would either send money orders for the merchandise to Peters' residence or Peters would have an intermediary company (PayPal) transfer the funds for the merchandise to his bank account. Peters would then withdraw those funds in amounts of \$10,000.00 or less to avoid reporting requirements.

Peters' online advertisements omitted material information such as the fact that the cameras and other items were stolen, that the items were not new, and that in fact, other buyers of similar items had returned them as defective.

An indictment is an accusation by a federal grand jury and a defendant is entitled to the presumption of innocence unless proven guilty. However, if convicted on all counts, Thomas Peters faces a maximum statutory 155-year term of imprisonment, a \$3.25 million fine and could be ordered to pay restitution to the victims of his crime.

United States Attorney Roper praised the investigative efforts of the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Lynn Hastings.